Mr. President, yesterday freedom took a giant step

forward.

History will rank January 30, 2005, alongside November 9, 1989, the

day the Berlin Wall fell, as a day when man's innate desire to be free

broke the shackles of tyranny.

Millions of Iraqis stood up to the terrorists and told them: We

reject your credo of violence. We reject your claim that Iraq cannot

join the democratic family of nations. We reject your belief that

Iraqis deserve nothing more than to live in fear of oppression.

One Iraqi voter, a businessman named Samir Sabih, put it better than

any of us could. Of yesterday he said:

The Iraqi elections for the National Assembly must be heralded as a

major success. Turnout has been reported as being anywhere from 60 to

70 percent, defying all expectations. Thanks to the dedication and

bravery of our troops, and the Iraqi police that we have trained, there

was much less violence than expected. We were all moved by the courage

of so many ordinary Iraqi citizens, each one risking their life to

proudly display a purple ink-stained finger.

While we do not yet know the results of the election, we can name the

winners--the people of Iraq--for enthusiastically embracing democracy;

the nations of the Middle East, that can now look to Iraq as a model;

and the people of every country, who now live in a world more favored

toward freedom.

Some cynics have missed the point of this election. For instance,

some say the vote is illegitimate if not enough Sunnis chose to

participate. But by all reports, the Shiite majority will not let this

stop Sunnis from having a voice. There will be a place for all

religions and ethnicities in the government. Interim Prime Minister

Iyad Allawi, himself a Shiite, has said:

I also heard a news reporter ask yesterday whether the election

results were good for President Bush. In case this reporter missed it,

President Bush was not on the ballot. Yesterday's historic achievement

was not about which party can collect political points. It was about

the march of freedom.

There is still a lot of hard work ahead before Iraq becomes a stable

democracy. America must stay committed. The Iraqis are counting on us

to help them in their quest for freedom, and we cannot, and we will

not, let them down. We must do what it takes for our security's sake,

so that Iraq never again becomes a cauldron of terrorism.

Many Americans and Iraqis risked everything to help realize the first

free vote in Iraq since 1953. Some gave their lives. We should offer

our thanks and our prayers to those who valiantly sacrificed. We can

honor their deeds by completing our task in Iraq.

Amidst the joy and celebrations yesterday, one Iraqi woman actually

gave birth at her polling station. She gave birth at her polling

station. Despite her pregnancy, she was determined that nothing would

stop her from casting her ballot. She named the child after the word

``election'' in her native language.

Mindful of the hard work still ahead, I hope and believe this baby

will grow up never knowing tyranny and oppression, never living under

totalitarian fear, never seeing a family member spirited away to be

murdered.

I hope and believe this child will grow up in a free society, with

the power to make his own destiny. Let's finish the job and ensure that

is so.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.